

Using Text-Based Materials to Improve English Listening Skill of Elementary Students

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Article received: 2018-02-01

Final proof received: 2018-03-02

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to improve English listening skill through text-based materials at the grade V students of SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II. This was a classroom action research, which used the cycle model of Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), consisting of three steps, (1) plan, (2) act and observe, and (3) reflect. The research instruments were observation, fieldnote, interview and listening tests. The reliability of the data was obtained by using triangulation method. The data were obtained from interview, observation and test. The data were analyzed by using interactive model developed by Miles and Hubberman (1984). The results of the research showed that the English listening skill of students improved by using text-based materials. Based on the process, the students' attention to the classroom activities improved and they enjoyed all classroom activities well. From the product of listening, the improvement can be seen from the result of students' listening test. The mean score of pre-action test is 55.05, while the mean score of the post-action test is 76.1.

Keywords : text-based materials, listening skill

INTRODUCTION

The School Based Curriculum (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2006) states that the teaching of English at the elementary school has two objectives. First, it aims at developing communicative competence through language accompanying action based on school context. Second, it gives students' awareness on the importance of learning English in the globalization era.

In relation to the objectives above, teaching English at the elementary schools should introduce students with the ability to understand spoken English

first. Listening should be introduced before other skills. Cameron (2001, p.67) stated that children are easier to learn a language through listening and speaking than from reading and writing. That is why Nunan (1999, p.200) also stated that listening plays greater important role in foreign language classrooms. There are some reasons for teaching listening as Rost in Nunan (1999, p.200). Those are:

- 1) Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner,
- 2) Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner,
- 3) Listening exercises provide teacher with a means for drawing learners' or students' attention,

SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II had practiced teaching English for some years. However, the result of students' listening test was not satisfying yet. The average score of students listening test was lower than the expected one. The average score of pre-action listening test was 55.05 while the minimum requirement of expected score was 70.00. This happened at grade 5th students of SD Muhammadiyah II. Besides, the students were less to pay their attention to English lesson. Some of them like to make noise and teased their friends during the lesson.

Therefore, the researcher tried to conduct a classroom action research in the effort to improve English listening skill of grade V students of SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II through text-based materials.

METHOD

This research is a classroom action resesarch which aims at improving English listening skill. Through text-based materials at the grade V students of SD Muhammadiyah kedungbanteng II. Based on the concept of classroom action research, this research focused on the efforts to solve the classroom problem, ie. English listening skill. To conduct this research, the researcher used the spiral model of Kemmis & McTaggart (2000). This research was divided into three stages: plan, act and observe, reflect.

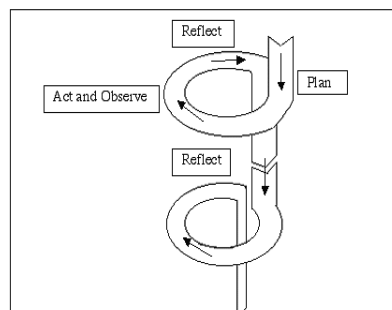


Image 1. *Stages of classroom action research*

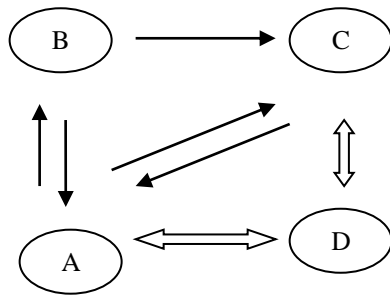
The subjects of this research were grade V students of SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II in the academic year of 2012/2013. The class has 21 students, 12 boys and 9 girls. These students were chosen as the subjects of the research due to the fact that their listening competence was still low. It can be seen from the result of the pre-test which is low. They learned English as a foreign language and it was taught as a local content subject. Based on the observation it is clear that the students are rarely to learn the text-based materials. Most of the learning materials is doing the exercises in the text books. They hardly learn the materials which are put into the real language use or texts. The research was conducted in two cycles which include planning, acting and observing, reflection, and reporting the result.

In order to get the data of this research, the researcher used some instruments. The first instrument was test. The test used in this research was listening test. In pre-action test, students were asked to be able to point some pictures of things while they were listening to the teacher. Here, the researcher would like to get data on students' ability to understand spoken English. Post-action test was conducted after all actions were completely done. It was to know if there was improvement on students' listening skill or not.

The second instrument was fieldnotes. Fieldnotes were used to record all activities happened in the classroom. Through this instrument, the researcher got detail data in the written form. It was made by the observer during the English class. The observer wrote on a piece of paper everything happened in the class from beginning to the end of the English lesson.

Third, this research also used documentation. It was to keep the obtained data during the research. The students' classroom activities were documented by camera. Thus, the results were some photos of students' activities. And also there were printed text for documentation like the researcher's students' attendance lists and students' tests.

Finally, this research also used interviews. These were done to the headmaster, the teacher and the students. To the headmaster the interview aimed to get permission for conducting the research. To the teacher, interview was done to discuss everything related to the practice of teaching English. While to the students, interview was done to know their problems in listening and to get their ideas before, during and after following some actions. All data were analyzed by using triangulation model by . The picture below shows how to analyze the data.



A = Data reduction

B = Collection data

C = Data display

D = Conclusion: Drawing/verifying

To conduct this research, the researcher used the spiral model of Kemmis and McTaggart (2000). This research was divided into three stages: plan, act and observe, reflect. In the planning stage, the researcher investigated the importance to carry out the research. It was done by identifying the main classroom problem and what the possible effort to solve the problem. The second stage, acting and observing was done by implementing the planned action in the classroom. During the action, the researcher observed what happened in the English teaching practice.

After that, the researcher made a reflection of what had been done in the classroom. How the action was able to solve the problem and the obstacles that might emerge during the action were discussed. In this stage the researcher and the collaborator decided to take the next step or to stop the action. If the problem had been solved, it is right to stop the action, but if the problem had not been solved then the should be revised plan to continue to the next cycle.

This classroom action research consisted of two cycles. Each session consisted of three stages namely, planning, acting and observing, and reflecting. In each cycle, there were three teaching sessions or three meetings. Therefore, in two cycles, the total meeting were six teaching sessions.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. Pre-action test

The result of pre-action test showed that students ability to comprehend spoke english was still low. It could be seen from the average score of students, i.e 55.05. There were only three students (14%) who got the score more than the minimum completeness criteria (70) and eighteen students (86%) got the score less than 70. So, the results of the test proved that students had problem in listening skill.

The researcher and the collaborator discussed the problem. Based on the interview with the English teacher, it was found that students were rarely involved in listening activity. Why? Because the teacher did not have enough time to present it. Moreover, the English teaching put emphasis on mastering the material of students work sheet. Listening test was not tested in the final exam. In other words, the material for teaching English was only from students work sheet.

Considering that students' problem was on listening skill, then the researcher and the English teacher, as the collaborator decided to use another material instead of using the printed student work sheets. The choosen materials were text-based materials.

Text-based materials of this research consisted of some listening materials which were presented in different spoken English tetxs. These materials were to give exposure to students, so that they were familiar with English spoken.

The first cycle of this research consisted of three meetings. Each meeting disscussed a certain topic. The chosen topics for the first cycle were *Introducing*, *Parts of the body* and *Food and Drink*. The planned texts for presenting the topics of learning materials were as folows:

| Table 1. <i>Topic of Learning Materials</i> | |
|---|--|
| Topic | Text |
| Introducing | Song : <i>Hello-hello</i> Story: <i>I am Chiko</i> |
| Parts of body | Song: <i>Head and shoulders, knees and toes</i> Game: <i>Simon Says</i> |
| Food and drink | Song: <i>Yummy, yummy</i> Game: <i>"Yes/No" game</i> |

In this first cycle, the focus of the learning objectives were: (1) students were able to understand spoken English easily, (2) students were able to participate actively in the listening activities by responding to the spoken English verbally or non-verbally, (3) students paid more attention to the lesson, (4) there were more student interactions.

The theme of the first meeting of cycle 1 was introducing. Students enjoyed singing "*hello-hello*" song. They paid their attention to the teacher who pointed them in turn and asked them to call out their names in turn.

After some minutes, the students began to lose their interest. Therefore, the teacher moved to another avtivity, i.e telling a story using a doll. In this activity,

the teacher explained that they had to fill in the table with the doll's identity while they were listening to her story. The doll's identity were its name, age and address. Therefore, most students could do well although sometimes they asked the teacher to repeat.

The second meeting of the first cycle was also similar with the first meeting. The theme was *Parts of the body*. Students were involved in listening activities, i.e listening to songs and listening to instruction. The main activity was playing "*Simon says*" game. They had to listen to the teacher carefully in order to be able to point parts of the body correctly. Based on the class observation it looked that students enjoyed playing "*Simon says*" game. This game adopted the Total Physical method. There were some positive aspects in using this game. Linse (2005, p.30) stated the first aspect was that it utilized the auditory, visual and tactile learning channels. Students listened, watched one another and did the commands themselves. The second aspect was this kind of game taught to listen attentively. The third aspect was that students were allowed to listen and prepared to speak. Finally, this game was easy to adapt in different ways.

In other words, this game was very effective in teaching listening skill since students had to listen carefully to the instruction so that they responded correctly. This game was also in line with purpose of teaching English at elementary school, i.e to develop communicative competence through language accompanying action based on school context.

The third meeting of first cycle was *about Food and Drink*. In presenting the materials about *Food and Drink*, the teacher used a song and a game. Visual aids were also used to create the context of learning material. The use of "*yummy-yummy*" song was meant to arouse students' interest to the learning material. Then, the use of game "*listening and sorting*" was meant to give students listening comprehension practice. Students should be able to find the right picture of word spoken by the teacher and put the picture on the right group. Through these activities all students enjoyed learning English very much.

Reflecting 1

Through the observation on what happened in the first cycle, the researcher and the English teacher concluded that: (1) students had better understanding on spoken English. Although at the beginning of cycle 1 they were still rather difficult to understand it, finally they could understand it through explanation or repetitive drills. This was in line with Brown's idea (2001, p.87) which stated that teaching a foreign language to children could be introduced by a dynamic repetition. Students were asked to repeat a certain language structure, but the object was different. For example in singing "*hello-hello*" song. The teacher asked them to repeat after her but finally they had to respond it differently according to their own names.

Hello....hello....hello.....3x

*I am **Andi/ Yusuf/Siti/Mela***

(each students said her/his own name after being appointed by the teacher).

(2) students were enthusiastically to participate in the class activities. During cycle 1, all students started to be able to participate in the listening activities in the classroom well. No body were silent or sleepy in the class. They focused on every activity presented by the teacher. They tried to respond English spoken verbally or non verbally. For example:

The teacher said: "Do we have two eyes?"

Students responded verbally : "Yes, we

The teacher said: "Do you have food?"

Students responded by showing pictures of food.

The teacher said : "Simon says touch your head."

Students responded by touching their own head.

(3) students paid more attention to the English class. To be involved in listening activities, there was improvement on students' attention to the lesson. The "listen and do" activity like "simon says" game was very effective to arouse students attention. Finocchiaro & Brumfit (1983) stated that giving simple listening game such as "simon says" was very good to give students experience using the language to improve their listening ability. Moreover this game was used to promote listening ability.

(4) there were more students' interaction. The use of text-based materials was able to improve more students-teacher and student-student interaction. Vandergrift & Goh (2012) explained that through listening some English texts, students were able receive an interaction with language input. The student-teacher interaction, for example, was seen when teacher asked student to take a picture of something spoken by the teacher. The teacher said "Give me fried noodle".

The student responded by taking the picture of fried noodle and stucked it on the board. While student-student interaction occurred when they were given a chance to practice using the language with their friends in pairs. For example:

Student A: " What will you do?"

Student B : "I will drink coffee."

Students B: "If you drink coffee, I'll eat biscuit."

Student A: "If you eat biscuit, I'll eat fried noodle."

Through this kind of activity, students were motivated to practice using English to interact with their friends. Knowing some improvement had been achieved, the researcher and the English teacher agreed that text-based materials gave benefits in teaching English to grade V students of SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II. However, the researcher and the English teacher thought that the actions should be continued to cycle 2 because some students were not confident enough in doing the classroom activities. Some of them were shy and silent during the English class.

The revised plan

The researcher and the English teacher made preparation for conducting actions in cycle 2. The revised plan was based on what had been done in cycle 1. The indicators were almost the same, but the emphasis was on improving more students' confidence in responding the English spoken. The first preparation was designing lesson plans. There were three topics for three meeting in cycle 2. There were "Animals", "Number" and "Things in the classroom." The planned texts for presenting the topics were as follows:

Table 2. *Revised Topic*

| Topic | Text |
|-------------------------|--|
| Animals | Song: Butterfly Game: I spy..... |
| Number | Song: One, two, three, Table number one |
| Things in the classroom | Game: "Do you have" game. |

Acting and Observing

The first meeting of cycle 2 was started by coloring. This activity took place in different place. It was in the school hall. Students were sitting on the floor to make them relaxed. They did not sit in rows, but they made a circle. Most students enjoyed coloring activity. Then, they had to stick their coloured pictures on the boards according to the size of animals (big and small). Here, the teacher also presented two songs with titles "Butterfly" and "A Big elephant". After that, the teacher presented "I spy....." game. Through this game, students were asked to listen to the teacher and guessed what animal it is. For example: "I spy with my little eyes something beginning with 'T'". Students tried to find the name of animal started with "T" and responded it by saying "Tiger". Finally they can practice in turn to make a quiz to their friends.

The second meeting of cycle 2 was listening to numbers. The teacher had prepared some number cards with a stick on it. Students were divided into ten groups. Each group had one number card. They had to show their number card and responded by singing the song.

Look at this example:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Group 1 sang | We are table |
| the song.(the | number |
| other students | ONE |
| were listening) | Where is number |
| | TWO ? |
| Group 2 | We are table |
| replied by | number |
| singing the | TWO |
| song and | Where is number |
| showing the | FOUR ? |
| number. | |

During this activity each group tried to listen carefully and paid their attention to be able to give correct response. The use of song which was accompanied by an action was very effective to arouse their interest and attention. This was supported by Sevik (2012) who stated that listening to the song helped students to overcome feelings of shyness and lack of confidence. They found it interesting and funny. The second activity was listening to a song and completing the blank lyrics. Each student was given a lyrics with some omitted words. They had to write the missing words through listening to the song individually. Based on the classroom observation, students did not have much problem in doing this activity and enjoyed doing it.

The last meeting of cycle 2 was listening to things in the classroom. Here, students were asked to listen to things at school and understand them. Students were involved in playing a game. To play the game they had to ask "yes/No" questions. In pairs each student had to ask "Do you have.....?" His/her partner should respond it "Yes, I do" (and showing the picture) or "No, I don't if she / he doesn't have the picture of thing at my classroom.

Reflecting 2

Based on the observation on what had been done from cycle 1 and 2, there had been some good changes. The changes were as follows:

- 1) Students had more and more confidence to perform in the classroom. The use of different texts (songs, games) aroused students interest and confidence.
- 2) there was more improvement on teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction as well.

3) students needed to learn in different place and situation. Instead of sitting on chairs, students might be sitting on the floor during learning English.

4) Considering that there was much improvement on students' listening skill the teacher and the researcher agreed to stop the action. Then, students were prepared to have post-action listening test. This test was conducted to know the students' listening ability viewed as a product. The result of this test showed that the average score of students' listening achievement was 76.14. It was more than the average of students' listening achievement in pre-action listening test, 55.05.

The obtained knowledge by the researcher

From conducting this action research, the researcher got some knowledge as follows:

1. Teaching listening skill is very important in teaching English for children. It cannot be ignored because it is not tested in the final exam.
2. Being an English teacher in teaching English for young learners or children demands more creativity to make the class more enjoyable.
3. Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners is challenging.

CONCLUSION

Pre-action test

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| Group 2 replied by singing the song and showing the number. | We are table number TWO Where is number FOUR ? |

During this activity each group tried to listen carefully and paid their attention to be able to give correct response. The use of song which was accompanied by an action was very effective to arouse their interest and attention. This was supported by Sevik (2012) who stated that listening to the song helped students

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Reflecting 2

Based on the observation on what had been done from cycle 1 and 2, there had been some good changes. The changes were as follows:

- 1) Students had more and more confidence to perform in the classroom. The use of different texts (songs, games) aroused students interest and confidence.
- 2) there was more improvement on teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction as well.
- 3) students needed to learn in different place and situation. Instead of sitting on chairs, students might be sitting on the floor during learning English.
- 4) Considering that there was much improvement on students' listening skill the teacher and the researcher agreed to stop the action. Then, students were prepared to have post-action listening test. This test was conducted to know the students' listening ability viewed as a product. The result of this test showed that the average score of students' listening achievement was 76.14. It was more than the average of students' listening achievement in pre-action listening test, 55.05.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this research can be concluded as follows:

1. Text-based materials could be used to teach English as a foreign language at grade V of SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II. There were some changes as the result of this research. First, the classroom situation is more alive. Students looked happy and enjoyed learning English very much. Next, the teacher became more creative because the teacher should not only use a textbook.
2. Text-based materials could improve students' listening skills. The improvement on listening skill were as follows: a) the students paid more attention to English lesson. b) students also enjoyed learning English very much.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is based on classroom action research conducted at SD Muhammadiyah Kedungbanteng II Moyudan. The research was meant to improve students' English listening skill. The use of text-based materials could be the alternative materials for teachers of English for young learners, especially at elementary schools. Why the researcher was interested in teaching listening? Naturally, children learn to acquire their first language through the order of listening, speaking, reading and finally writing. Then why text-based materials? Text-based materials means the materials which are taken from the real use of language. For children, the texts can be songs, stories, or games.

From conducting this action research, the researcher got some knowledge as follows:

- 1) Teaching listening skill is very important in teaching English for children. It cannot be ignored merely because it is not tested in the final exam.
- 2) Being an English teacher in teaching English for young learners or children demands more creativity to make the class more enjoyable.
- 3) Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners is challenging.

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